

UPDATE

Bone Health Fact Sheet

Bones play many roles in the body. They provide structure, protect organs, anchor muscles, and store calcium. Adequate calcium consumption and weight bearing physical activity build strong bones, optimizes bone mass, and may reduce the risk of osteoporosis later in life.

Peak Bone Mass

Peak bone mass refers to the genetic potential for bone density. By the age of 20, the average woman has acquired most of her skeletal mass. A large decline in bone mass occurs in older adults, increasing the risk of osteoporosis. For women this occurs around the time of menopause. It is important for young girls to reach their peak bone mass in order to maintain bone health throughout life.

Osteoporosis

Osteoporosis or "porous bone" is a disease of the skeletal system characterized by low bone mass and deterioration of bone tissue. Osteoporosis leads to an increase risk of bone fractures typically in the wrist, hip, and spine. While men and women of all ages and ethnicities can develop osteoporosis, some of the risk factors for osteoporosis include those who are:

- Female
- White/Caucasian
- Post menopausal women
- Older adults
- Small in body size
- Eating a diet low in calcium
- Physically inactive

To find out more about the prevalence and risk factors associated with osteoporosis, please visit the National Osteoporosis Foundation Web site at <http://www.nof.org/osteoporosis/stats.htm>.

Calcium

Calcium is a mineral needed by the body for healthy bones, teeth, and proper function of the heart, muscles, and nerves. The body cannot produce calcium; therefore, it must be absorbed through food. Good sources of calcium include:

- Dairy products—*low fat or nonfat milk, cheese, and yogurt*
- Dark green leafy vegetables—*bok choy and broccoli*
- Calcium fortified foods—*orange juice, cereal, bread, soy beverages, and tofu products*
- Nuts—*almonds*

Weight-Bearing Physical Activity

Regular physical activity has been associated with many positive health benefits including strong bones. Like proper calcium consumption, adequate weight-bearing physical activity early in life is important in reaching peak bone mass.

